

15478 COMPETITIVE PROBLEMS IN THE DRUG INDUSTRY

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Finally, one important way to get at irrational use of drugs is through better education of the physicians who prescribe the drugs and the pharmacists who dispense them without prescription, legally or illegally. Yet most Latin American countries have major problems with education of professional health personnel. The oldest medical school in the hemisphere is that of the University of San Marcos, in Lima, Peru, but it, along with the great majority of the medical schools in the various countries, suffers from shortage of equipment and teaching resources. Improving health professions education has been a long-standing concern of PAHO and WHO. The Pan American Health and Education Foundation, of which I am a Trustee, is engaged in an important program to help get textbooks to medical and nursing students in every country of Latin America at reduced rates. The problem of limited educational resources makes it more difficult to compete with the educational efforts of the pharmaceutical companies, each of which, naturally, is intent upon promoting its own product and has easy access to sophisticated advertising and informational techniques. Thus the question of partisan promotion of drugs is significant at all levels of medical education.

Mr. Chairman, to my knowledge, your own interest in the problem of drug distribution in this area goes back many years. I am aware of the hearings you held some years ago at which testimony was received on the efforts of the Pan American Health Organization and the World Health Organization to provide help and guidance to the member countries and to foster a spirit of international cooperation in this field. Nevertheless, I thought it might be useful to mention some of the PAHO/WHO activities in this field. During my own period as a full-time staff member of the